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ABSTRACT

This study was concerned with assessing both prereading and reading activities on the kindergarten level. A questionnaire survey was made of selected aspects of the content and conduct of the kindergarten prereading and reading programs in school districts throughout the state of California. The questionnaire used consisted of three parts: Part 1 was concerned with general background information on the community, school, and teachers; Part 2 with reading readiness; and Part 3 with the formal reading program. Twenty main findings of the study were explained. The study seemed to indicate that kindergarten teachers need more help and guidance concerning the place of reading and the methods and techniques of reading in the kindergarten curriculum. District and school administrative personnel must correct this problem if the individual needs of the pupils are to be met in regard to preparing and teaching the children to read. References are included. (Author/NH)

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THE TEACHING OF READING IN KINDERGARTEN

by

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THE PROBLEM

In recent years with an upsurge of interest in and concern for the education of the preschool child and the kindergarten child, changes have occurred in the role of the kindergarten. The question frequently arises: Should formal reading instruction be given on the kindergarten level? There is a wide divergence of views on this question; but while the controversy continues to rage, a variety of reading programs are being carried on in kindergartens throughout the nation. The present study was concerned with assessing both pre-reading and reading activities on the kindergarten level.

PROCEDURES

Description of the population. To achieve the purpose of this study, a questionnaire survey was made of selected aspects of the content and conduct of kindergarten pre-reading and reading programs in school districts throughout the state of California. No one knows better than the classroom teacher about the reading program being carried on in his classroom. However, the scope of the teacher population in the fifty states prevents an investigator from using the total teacher population as his sample in a study. Therefore, in the present study it was decided to limit the population to one state--the state of California. This made it possible to distribute the questionnaires to those who actually were doing the pre-reading and reading instruction--the teachers. It was assumed that the kindergarten teachers in California would be representative of kindergarten teachers throughout the nation. The original population consisted of all school districts with kindergarten classes and with pupil enrollments of 2,000 or more (according to the 1967 Directory of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel of California Public Schools, prepared by the California Bureau of Education Research). It was noted that some of the counties in the state did not have school districts with pupil enrollments of 2,000 or more. So that all 58 counties would have the opportunity to participate in the study, in those counties with school districts having pupil enrollments of less than 2,000, several school districts with the largest pupil enrollments were invited to participate in the study.

A total of 292 school districts in 58 counties were invited to participate in the study. Those school districts which were willing to cooperate in the study indicated the number of kindergarten teachers in their school districts so that the appropriate number of questionnaires could be sent to them for distribution to their kindergarten teachers. The participating population was composed of those 123 school districts in 44 counties whose kindergarten teachers completed and returned the questionnaires. Each of the school districts was assigned to one of four categories on the basis of community population: large metropolitan city (1,000,000 or more), medium-sized city (between 50,000 and 999,999), small city (between 10,000 and 49,999), and village or town (under 10,000). This classification resulted in a distribution of 16 large school districts, 34 medium districts, 55 small districts, and 18 village or town districts. Percentage-wise

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this means that of the participating districts, 13.0% were located in large metropolitan cities, 27.6% in medium-sized cities, 44.7% in small cities, and 14.6% in villages or towns. The following table provides additional information on the school communities.

TABLE 1

Description of School Communities	
1. Population	
a. Large metropolitan city (1,000,000 or more)	13.0%
b. Medium-sized city (between 50,000 and 999,000)	27.6%
c. Small city (between 10,000 and 49,999)	44.7%
d. Village or town (under 10,000)	14.6%
2. Type of community	
a. Agricultural	39.0%
b. Suburban	39.0%
c. Industrial	22.0%
a. Slum or depressed	29.0%
b. Middle class	53.1%
c. Affluent	17.9%
3. Estimate of average income of families of pupils in teachers' classes	
a. Under $3,000	5.5%
b. $ 3,000-$ 4,999	21.3%
c. $ 5,000-$ 7,499	28.4%
d. $ 7,500-$ 9,999	24.8%
e. $10,000-$14,999	12.9%
f. $15,000-$25,000	5.8%
g. Over $25,000	1.4%

A total of 2,144 questionnaires were distributed and 931 (or 43.4%) were returned by the kindergarten teachers. The total number of schools in the 123 school districts (according to the 1967 Directory of Administrative and Supervisory Personnel of California Public Schools) numbered 1,679. It should be noted that not all the schools had kindergarten classes and that some schools had more than one kindergarten class. (Specific data concerning these two factors were not collected in this study) The kindergarten teachers who completed the returned questionnaires represented 694 (or 41.7%) of the 1,679 schools in the 123 districts All of the 931 kindergarten teachers who participated in the study were female. Their mean age was 39.1 years, the mean number of years taught was 10.9 years, the mean number of years taught in kindergarten was 7 7 years, the mean number of reading courses taken was 4.46. All of the teachers had received bachelor's degrees,

while 5.7% had also received master's degrees. The teachers taught a total of 41,165 pupils, with a mean of 28.4 pupils per class. Thirty-nine percent of the teachers had read books on reading instruction recently, while 61% had not. When asked if they had the opportunity to scan journals regularly concerned with reading instruction, 53.4% of the teachers said that they did, while 46.7% replied that they did not. The journals most frequently scanned were (in order of frequency): The Grade Teacher, The Instructor, Today's Education (NEA Journal), The California Teachers Association Journal, and The Reading Teacher. The following table provides additional information on the teacher population.

TABLE 2

Characteristics of the Kindergarten Teacher Population

		MEAN	MEDIAN	RANGE
1.	Sex - Female: 931; Male: 0			
2.	Age - Mean: 39.1 years Median: 38.5 years Range: 21-67 years			
3.	Degrees earned: Bachelor's: 931 (100%) Master's: 53 (5.7%)			
4.	Number of years taught	10.9	8.5	1-39
5.	Number of years taught in kindergarten	7.7	6	0-32
6.	Number of reading courses taken:	4.46	4.0	0-18
7.	Read books on reading instruction recently: Yes: 39% No: 61%			
8.	Scan reading journals regularly? Yes: 53.4% No: 46.7%			
9.	Number of pupils taught: - Mean number of pupils per class - 28.4 - Total number taught by 931 teachers -41,165 pupils - Total number of classes taught: 1,449 - Mean number of classes taught: 1.56 per teacher			

Description of the questionnaire. The questionnaire used in the study consists of three parts:

Part I is concerned with obtaining general background information about the community, school, and the individual teacher responding to the questionnaire.

Part II is concerned with reading readiness. In this section, there are questions about the following aspects of the reading readiness program: (1) time allotted to various readiness activities, (2) types of materials used in the readiness program, and (3) types of activities used in the readiness program.

Part III is concerned with the formal reading program. This section consists of questions about the following aspects of the formal reading program: (1) reason(s) for formal reading instruction on the kindergarten level, (2) approaches used in reading instruction, (3) materials used in the instructional program, (4) kind of organization used in the program, (5) approaches used in teaching word recognition skills, (6) skills taught in the instructional program, and (7) teacher's personal opinion on various aspects of the reading program.

Formal reading instruction as used in this study is reading instruction beyond readiness which is given at a time period allotted to it in a school day either to individual children, small groups, or the whole class.

RESULTS

The following were some of the main findings of the study:

1. Of 931 teachers who responded, 41.6% of the teachers revealed that their school districts had a specific kindergarten reading curriculum that was required of them; 58.4% of the teachers said that there was no specific reading curriculum required. This seems to indicate that there is a need for school districts to provide their kindergarten teachers with more guidance concerning the reading curriculum in the kindergarten program.

2. It was also revealed that 35.5% of the teachers had a specific kindergarten reading curriculum required by the school, while 64.5% of the teachers had no specific reading curriculum required of them by the school. Here again, it seems that the schools should give the teachers more guidance concerning the methods and techniques to be used in the teaching of reading as well as the place and content of reading instruction in the kindergarten curriculum.

3. When the teachers were asked if they thought a planned reading readiness program is desirable for all, most, some or no children, 29.1% felt that all children should participate in a planned readiness program, 42.6% felt that most should, 22.7% thought that some should, 1.2% said that no children should participate in such a program, and 4.5% felt that it was difficult to state an opinion. The responses seem to indicate that a number of kindergarten teachers are unaware of their responsibility regarding a reading readiness program in the kindergarten curriculum--to provide a planned readiness program which meets the individual needs of all pupils.

4. When the teachers were questioned concerning their point of view on reading readiness in kindergarten, 6% said that kindergarten programs should have a systematic approach to reading readiness, including use of workbooks and other pre-planned materials. Thirty. eight and eight tenths percent said that kindergarten programs should use the environmental challenges to reading that occur in the daily life of the kindergarten, putting emphasis on a varied active day, a wide range of experiences, including many trips, and work with a variety of materials; 51.4% felt that characteristics of both types of programs would result in an effective readiness program in the kindergarten; 3 8% of the teachers held other miscellaneous points of view on readiness in kindergarten. Although a large number of teachers (38.8%) felt that a readiness program should consist primarily of direct experiences and informal activities, the majority (51.5%) of teachers felt that it was not necessary to dichotomize the readiness program into formal or informal activities, as some educators frequently do. They thought that an effective readiness program should have a variety of activities, both informal and formal.

5. The teachers were asked if they provided a planned sequential reading readiness program for the children in their classes. Eighty percent of the teachers replied in the affirmative and 20% responded negatively. Though a large majority said that they do provide a planned readiness program in kindergarten, it would seem that 100% of the teachers should have been doing so. This means that it is likely that many children of the teachers who did not provide a planned readiness program may enter first grade ill prepared or less prepared to succeed in the reading activities of the classroom.

6. A variety of diagnostic tools were employed by the kindergarten teachers as guides in their readiness instruction. Teacher observation of the pupil's behavior was the most frequently used technique. Eighty-six percent of the teachers used this procedure All other procedures were utilized much less frequently. The tools used and the percentage of teachers using them were as follows: (1) teacher-made tests, 37%; (2) parent information, 30.1%; (3) reading readiness test results, 24.5%; (4) school records, 11 9%; (5) intelligence test results, 5.7%; and (6) other miscellaneous tools, such as the Frostig test, district-made tests, 3.3%. (Percentages total more than 100% because many teachers used more than one diagnostic tool.) Because so many teachers depend on observation as the means for diagnosis, it is important that they are given help and guidance concerning what should be observed and how application of knowledge gained through observation might be made to reading instruction.

7. The types of procedures and activities which the kindergarten teachers thought to be of most value in their readiness programs were ranked from one to six. Following are the various types of activities chosen most frequently by the teachers and those which received the highest mean rankings: (1) desirable attitudes toward school and reading, 740 times, rank 3.02; (2) personal and social adjustment, 376 times, rank 1.78; (3) ability to follow directions, 332 times, rank 3.14; (4) ability to listen and respond creatively, 281 times, rank 3.21; (5) visual discrimination, 277 times, rank 3.39; (6) oral language facility, 267 times, rank 3.20; (7) auditory discrimination, 239 times, rank 3.22; and (8) eye-hand coordination, 199 times, rank 3.19.

The specific procedures and activities which the kindergarten teachers found to be most valuable in developing the children's readiness for reading in the various areas were ranked from one to six. The following were selected most frequently and received the highest mean rankings:

(a) for growth in language usage, (1) reading or telling stories, 469 times, rank 2.84; (2) providing firsthand experiences, 410 times, rank 2.16; (3) providing conversation and discussion periods on topics of interest to the pupils, 375 times, rank 2.83;

(b) for visual perception development, (1) perceiving likenesses and differences of objects, 444 times, rank 2.96; (2) working with tridimensional objects, such as puzzles, cubes, 405 times, rank 3.03; (3) developing motor or bodily coordination, 393 times, rank 2.59;

(c) for auditory perception development, (1) listening to rhymes and jingles, 531 times, rank 2.32; (2) perceiving ordinary sounds of one's environment, 530 times, rank 2.04; (3) listening for rhyming words, 519 times, rank 3.28; (4) discriminating sounds that occur at the beginning of words, 508 times, rank 3.61;

(d) for vocabulary development, (1) telling or reading stories to the pupils, 547 times, rank 2.71; (2) having pupils bring toys and objects to school and tell about them, 496 times, rank 2.69; (3) providing pupils opportunities to engage in creative activities through art and music, 424 times, rank 3.53; (4) giving pupils opportunities to read pictures, 398 times, rank 3.30;

(e) for extending word meanings, (1) interpretation of pictures, rank 1.39 (no frequency count because only five items are listed in this category and all items were ranked); (2) interpretation of deeper meanings in stories read or told by the teacher, rank 2.21; (3) critical evaluation of what is read by the teacher, rank 2.57;

(f) for laying the foundation for study skills in reading, (1) following oral directions, rank 1.98 (no frequency count because only six items are listed in this category and all items were ranked); (2) recalling printed material through such experiences as memorizing rhymes or short poems repeated in incidental oral contacts, reproducing a short story from one told by the teacher, or remembering directions in connection with classroom activities, rank 2.23; (3) organizing or classifying things in working with objects, pictures, words, letters, dittoed materials, rank 2.41;

(g) for laying the foundation for interest in literature, (1) hearing, retelling, and dramatizing fanciful tales, looking at picture books, rank 1.87 (no frequency count in this category because only four items are listed in this category and all items were ranked); (2) hearing and discussing realistic stories about boys and girls of their own age living in their own world, rank 1.98; (3) listening to rhymes, jingles, and short poems, rank 1.98; and

(h) for laying the foundation for reading rate, (1) playing games which involve left and rightness orientations, such as Looby Loo, Touching Game, Direction Game, rank 1.99 (no frequency count in this category because only five items are listed and all items were ranked); (2) following objects or pictures in lines from left to right and back again, rank 2.18; (3) utilizing incidental activities to develop a sense of leftness to rightness and rightness to leftness, such as discussion of positions of figures drawn in children's own pictures, rank 2.46; and (4) utilizing picture activities to develop left to right and right to left perception, such as placing pictures in the pockets of a wall pocket chart, finding pictures of objects going in different directions, making picture charts of objects which are going to the right or left, rank 2.46.

8. The teachers were asked their opinions concerning when formal reading instruction should begin; 1.3% of the teachers felt that all children should be given formal reading instruction before they are six years of age; 10.6% said most children should, 69.5% thought that some children should, and 8.7% felt that no children below six years of age should be given formal reading instruction; 9.8% said that it was difficult to state an opinion on this point.

When asked if they thought that formal reading instruction should be delayed until the child is seven years old, the teachers responded in the following manner: 1.1% felt that such instruction should be delayed for all children until they are seven years old; 17.4% said it should be delayed for most children; 69.9% thought that it should be delayed for some children; 2.8% felt that it should be delayed for no children; and 8.8% said that it was difficult to state an opinion on this point. There is a wide diversity of opinions as to when formal reading instruction should begin, but the majority seem to recognize individual differences in children as they stated that they felt some children are ready to receive formal reading instruction before they are six years old and some children may not be ready until they are seven.

9. Seventy-five percent of the kindergarten teachers said that they did not provide a planned sequential approach to reading instruction beyond readiness in their classrooms. Twenty-five percent of the teachers provided all or some of their pupils with formal reading instruction beyond readiness. Of all the teachers who did provide formal reading instruction on this level, 39.8% provided this instruction for the whole class and 60.2% provided it for individual children who showed themselves ready to undertake it.

10. The kindergarten teachers were asked what they felt was of most value to teachers in improving their reading instruction and keeping up with developments in the field of reading. The items listed were ranked from one to six and the results were as follows:

	Mean Rank
(1) District workshops or institutes	1.6
(2) College courses	2.9
(3) Consultants	3.2
(4) Books and journals	3.8
(5) Conversations with others	4.0
(6) Conventions	5.1

District workshops or institutes were ranked first in importance and was 1.3 points above the item listed next in order of importance. This seemed to indicate that the teachers probably relied heavily on the activities which their own districts provided them in improving their reading instruction and keeping abreast of new developments in the field of reading. It also places a heavy responsibility on school districts to provide such workshops or institutes for their teachers. College courses were ranked second in order of importance. Here, too, education departments of colleges and universities have the responsibility to offer courses which will be of value to teachers in helping them continue to grow and improve in their teaching of reading so that their children will reap the benefits of their gain in knowledge and its application.

11. The teachers who taught in schools or school districts which provided formal reading instruction beyond readiness on the kindergarten level were asked if they knew why the decision was reached to provide such a program. One hundred thirty four or 57.5% of the teachers knew why the decision was made in their

schools or districts. The reasons and the percentage of teachers giving each reason were as follows: (1) children have had so much exposure to learning and reading beforearriving at kindergarten, they are ready to learn to read when they enter kindergarten, 39.6%; (2) research has shown that young children can learn how to read, 29.9%; (3) the children ask to be taught how to read and they "love it", 19.4%; (4) parents are requesting that their children be taught reading on the kindergarten level, 16.4%; and (5) in the present Space Age, there is a need to begin academic learning earlier, 13.4%. (Percentages total more than 100% because some teachers gave more than one reason for the decision made to provide formal reading instruction in their particular schools or districts.)

The two reasons which were selected most frequently (69.5% of the teachers did so) show that most of the schools or districts felt that the children were ready to learn to read. They felt this way becauseof the experiences children have even before going to school and because research has shown that young children can learn how to read with no ill effects physically or psychologically. Recent research by Durkin (1) and my McKee, Harrison, and Brzeinski (3) has provided evidence that when the reading program is adjusted to the needs and abilities of the children who learned to read early, they continue to hold their advantage over those who learned to read at a later age. Today with Headstart programs and television programs such as "Sesame Street", children entering kindergarten and first grade are likely to be much more ready to learn to read when they enter school than they have been in the past.

12. In classroom in which formal reading instruction was provided, the following diagnostic tools were employed as guides in deciding whether or not a child was ready for formal reading instruction: (1) teacher observation of pupil's behavior, 100%; (2) reading readiness test results, 41.6%; (3) teacher-made tests, 38.2%; (4) parent information, 22.7%; and (5) intelligence tests, 10.3%. (Percentages total more than 100% because many teachers used more than one diagnostic tool.) Here again, as in the diagnosis of reading readiness, it can be seen that teachers are highly dependent on observation as the means for diagnosis of the child's readiness for formal reading instruction. The question arises: Are we doing enough in the preparation of teachers and in their in-service training to provide them with the knowledge and background needed so they can do an effective job of observing the child's needs and abilities and also of applying knowledge gained through observation in planning and providing the children's reading instruction. Another question which arises is: Are we providing our teachers with apprpriate and an adequate number of tools so that they can diagnose the needs and abilities of their pupils effectively. This step in the process of teaching reading is too often neglected or overlooked.

13. Teachers who provided their children with formal reading instruction in kindergarten were asked how much time was given per day to formal reading in truction. The amount of time allotted per day and the percentage of teachers providing formal reading instruction during each time allotment were as follows: (1) 20 minutes, 48.8%; (2) 30 minutes, 32.6%; (3) 45 minutes, 10.3%; (4) 60 minutes, 4.3%; and (5) other miscellaneous time allotments, such as 10 minutes, varying times, 3.9%. The time spent by each teacher on formal reading instruction varied widely as might be expected since the teachers had children of varying abilities and needs. However, the majority of teachers spent a time period of 30 minutes or less per day on formal reading instruction. This, too, is expected since such young children are likely to have short attention spans.

14. The kindergarten teachers who gave their pupils formal reading instruction ranked from one to six those materials which they considered most important

in their formal reading program. Following are the materials used by the teachers, their frequency of selection by the teachers among the top six, and their mean ranks respectively: (1) experience charts, 195, 2.69; (2) flannel materials, 177, 2.64; (3) concrete objects and visual materials, 177, 2.64; (4) chalkboard, 146, 3.47; (5) teacher-devised worksheets, 151, 372; (6) tradebooks or storybooks, 106, 3.46; (7) phonic charts, 112, 3.95; (8) commercially prepared worksheets, 90, 3.92; (9) basal readers, 62, 2.76; (10) workbooks, 62, 3.14; (11) supplementary readers, 45, 3.73; and (12) picture dictionaries, 51, 5.05; and (13) other miscellaneous materials, such as S.R A. kits, programmed materials, Peabody kits, 37, 2.23. The findings indicatethat the teachers realize that the use of a variety of materials can help to make their reading programs more effective.

15. A variety of approaches were used by those teachers who provided formal reading instruction for their pupils. The approaches used and the percentage of teachers using them were as follows: (1) language experience approach, 60.3%; (2) experience chart approach, 55.3%; (3) separate phonics programs, 32.9%; (4) linguistic approach, 26.9%; (5) multisensory approach, 18.7%; (6) individualized reading approach, 17.4%; (7) basal reader appreach, 15.5%; (8) words in color approach, 11 9%; (9) programmed reading approach, 10.5%; (1) use of initial teaching alphabet (i.t.a.), 9.6%; (11) use of Science Research Associates (S.R.A.) laboratory kits, 6.4%; and (12) phonovisual approach, 1.4%. (Percentages total more than 100% because many teachers used more than one approach in their reading instruction.

16. The procedures, experiences, knowledge and skills which the kindergarten teachers thought to be of most value in their formal reading programs were also ranked from one to six. Following are those selected most frequently and those which received the highest mean rankings:

(a) for developing word meaning and vocabulary, (1) picture clues, 124 times, rank 1.50; (2) verbal context clues, 109 times, rank 2.25; (3) related words, 89 times, rank 3.50; (4) definitions, 83 times, rank 3.38; (5) synonyms, 71 times, rank 4.11;

(b) for developing concepts and vocabulary, (1) provide ppportunities for discussions about direct and vicarious experiences, 140 times, rank 1.94; (2) provide firsthand experiences, 128 times, rank 2.77; (3) use the question method for understanding and interpreting what is read, 110 times, rank 3.06; (4) teach use of context clues in deriving meaning, 100 times, rank 3.45; (5) encourage and guide pupils in wide reading, 94 times, rank 3.61;

(c) for developing ability in word recognition, (1) teach consonant symbols and sounds, 114 times, rank 1.14; (2) teach consonant blends, 96 times, rank 2.52; (3) teach vowel symbols and sounds, 88 times, rank 2.57; (4) teach plural forms, 73 times, rank 2.90; (5) teach consonant digraphs, 68 times, rank 3.37; (6) teach compound words, 65 times, rank 4.45; (7) teach vowel digraphs, 64 times, rank 4.55; and (8) teach vowel diphthongs, 64 times, rank 5.50.

(d) for developing ability in comprehension and interpretation of what is read, (1) recognizing and discussing main ideas, 109 times, rank 1.71; (2) practicing with sequence, 104 times, rank 2.63; (3) discussing sentence meaning, 93 times, rank 2.64; (4) observing and discussing details or facts, 79 times, rank 3.90; (5) observing and discussing phrase meaning, 73 times, rank 3.90;

(e) for developing oral reading skills, (1) setting standards with children, 99 times, rank 1.89; (2) altering voice for different characters, moods, meanings

98 times, rank 2.55; (3) noting effect of punctuation, 85 times, rank 2.86; (4) evaluating pupil's oral reading, 84 times, rank 3.08; (5) studying stress appropriate to meaning, 82 times, rank 3.50;

(f) for developing ability in the study skills, (1) remembering what is said 83 times, rank 1.93; (2) reading for the main idea, 79 times, rank 2.44; (3) following directions, 74 times, rank 3.28; (4) generalizing or drawing conclusions, 70 times, rank 3.66; and (5) following and predicting sequence of events, 66 times rank 3.90.

17. The kindergarten teachers with formal reading instruction in their classrooms were asked what kind of organization they had for teaching reading. The results were as follows: (1) mainly by instructing the class as a whole, 39.4%; (2) mainly instruction in groups based on reading ability, 29.9%; (3) main-16 individual instruction, 19.5%; and (4) mainly instruction in groups based on social factors, interests, or other factors not involving reading ability, 11.3%. It can be seen that a large percentage of teachers taught formal reading mainly by instructing the class as a whole. Probably this is so because that which was being taught was being presented for the first time to all pupils. One wonders if <u>all</u> the children were ready for such instruction. If not, how was provision made for those who were not ready for such instruction? It is hoped that follow-up activities provided for individual differences among the children for learning to read.

18. The teachers were also asked what kind of phonetic training was provided in the formal reading instruction in their classrooms. Their responses were as follows: (1) teaching the sounds of letters and letter combinations to those children who are ready for it, 39.7%; (2) a systematic program to teach the rules for sounding letters and letter combinations, using specific class period and exercises, 32.1%; (3) a program of teaching the sounds of letters and letter combinations mainly as they appear in words in children's reading, but arranged to cover all the major rules of sounding, 23.9%; and (4) as little teaching of phonics as possible, 4.3%. The results show that a large majority of teachers feel that phonic instruction is an important part of the reading program, as evidenced by the fact that only 4.3% of them taught as little phonics as possible.

19. When asked what tools they employed to evaluate the progress of the pupils in the development of reading proficiency, the teachers responded as follows: (1) teacher observation, 48.1%; (2) teacher-made tests, 26.6%; (3) anecdotal and cumulative records, 17.6%; (5) standardized tests, 15%; (5) workbook tests, 8.2%; and (6) questionnaires evaluating attitudes, interests, tastes, 5.6%. Again, it is seen that the teachers are highly dependent on teacher observation in their evaluation of the reading progress of their pupils. Are teachers adequately prepared in knowing what should be observed and how to use the knowledge gained in their planning and instruction for developing reading skills? Are teachers being given adequate tools for diagnosing individual needs and evaluating pupil progress in the reading program? (percentages total more than 100% because some teachers used more than one diagnostic tool.)

20. Those kindergarten teachers who provided their children with formal reading instruction were asked if they felt that giving formal reading instruction beyond readiness was good or harmful for kindergarten children. They replied as follows: (1) it's difficult to say whether it does harm or good, 39.6%; (2) it does a great deal of good to the children, 22.8%; (3) it does more harm

than good to the children, 20%; (4) it does more good than harm to the children, 15.2%; and (5) it does a great deal of harm to the children, 2.4%. Although a large number of teachers (38%) felt that formal reading instruction was good for the children, there remained a large number, 39.6% who were uncertain at this point as to the good or harmful effects of such instruction. Research studies in the past such as those by Keister (2) and Vernon, O'Gorman, and McClellan (5) had indicated that children who learned to read at a later chronological age caught up with their peers who had learned to read at an earlier age and that those who learned to read beforesix were not able to maintain the skills learned. So educators had felt there was no advantage to such early reading instruction. However, more recent research by Sutton (4), Durkin (1), and McKee, Harrison and Brzeinski (3) had findings which seemed to provide evidence otherwise. Their findings showed that those who either learned to read beforesix at home or in school continued to hold the advantage over their peers who learned to read at a later age when the reading program was adjusted to their reading abilities. In Durkin's study the research data suggested that an early start in learning to read was valuable especially for children with lower intelligence scores because it allowed for a slower learning pace and for extra practice. However, more research needs to be done beforedefinitive conclusions are drawn about early reading instruction. Therefore, one can easily see why such a large percentage of teachers are still uncertain as to whether or not early formal reading instruction is good or harmful for kindergarten children.

In the meantime, what are kindergarten teachers to do? Should formal reading instruction be given on the kindergarten level? The answer is "yes" for those children who are ready and eager to learn to read, if the educator means what he says when he makes the statements that the teacher should begin where the child is and that individual differences should be considered in planning for and teaching the child. However, teachers must guard against the danger of pushing those children who are not ready into formal reading instruction and must not neglect other important aspects of the kindergarten program. Also, appropriate approaches, techniques, and materials suitable for children of this level must be utilized in the formal reading instruction. This means that the kindergarten teacher must be able to assess and diagnose the reading abilities and needs of her children and must be able to select and use those methods and techniques which would be most effective in meeting the individual needs and abilities of her children and in helping them learn to read with success.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings of this study seem to indicate that kindergarten teachers need more help and guidance concerning the place of reading and the methods and techniques of reading in the kindergarten curriculum. District and school administrative personnel must meet this need if the individual needs of the pupils are to be met in regards to preparing and teaching the children to read.

It is the responsibility of universities and colleges which train students for teaching in kindergarten to prepare them to meet the needs of children who enter school with a need for reading readiness as well as those who enter school able to read and enthusiastic about and ready to receive formal reading instruction. This, of course, points to the importance of helping students acquire the diagnostic skills needed to assess the needs of the pupils in reading and prescribe the learning activities in the kindergarten reading program which meet the individual needs of the pupils.

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